Churches WV
Unit. / Univers.
Community Affairs File

Unitarians see religion as personal experience

(Churches (4-H)) Community Affairs File

Ts OCT 2 2 1983

By Dave Delaney
Tribune-Star Staff Reporter

If you're turned off by traditional religion, Terre Haute's Unitarian-Universalist Church might just be your cup of tea.

"We tend to attract those dissolutioned with traditional religion," says Mel Browning, a member of the church's board of directors, and twice the group's president. "The whole idea behind our church is that religion is a personal experience and that people should develop their own philosophy rather than accept what's imposed upon them by a church heirarchy."

Browning says Unitarians rely heavily upon the scientific method in their quest for truth. "Religion shouldn't create inner conflicts with that which is known scientifically or by any other way," he says.

The bible is an important book to Unitarians. "However, we rely on thousands of books not just one book," says Browning.

Unitarians take the humanistic approach to most problems. "We have an underlying belief in humanity," explains Browning. "People ought to behave properly not because God will get you, but because of our respect for our fellow man."

Browning acknowledges Unitarianism is not for everyone.

"If a person wants to be told what to do he won't feel comfortable with our religion," Browning explains. Unitarians feel a person should live by a personal philosophy honed by experience.

Calvin R. Knapp

While Unitarianism has long had a reputation of liberalism, Browning says not to confuse that with radical politics. "We've got many in our church who voted for Reagan for president," he says. "Our people don't necessarily go along with far left politics."

He said Unitarians are very tolerant of other's beliefs. "We don't think there's such a thing as a non valid religion," Browning offered. "We might argue all day about religion, but we don't question anyone's personal belief."

It's been some years since the local Unitarians have had a minister. However, they've got one now in Calvin Knapp, a 57-year-old circuit rider who also conducts services at Unitarian churches in Evansville and Hutsonville, Ill.

A blue-eyed, heavyset man with graying hair, Knapp has a bachelor's degree from DePauw University and a graduate degree from the Garrett Theological School of Northwestern University.

Knapp said many Unitarians have been reared in other churches and have switched allegiances. "They've become tired of accepting so much stuff on faith," said the minister, "and lots of it has been irrational."

Knapp, raised a Methodist, believes Unitarians are the most tolerant group of people he's ever come across. He also says, as a group, Unitarians are hungry for knowledge of all types.

"They're intellectually oriented," he says, "and want to be enriched." While many Unitarians have had the advantage of a college education, there are many who have not, he added.

The minister sees Unitarians as very willing to accept new ideas. "As a group we're very capable of changing their minds," he says. "Even our older people are growing people."

Knapp says Unitarians are very appreciative of the laws of nature. "Natural laws are almost our bible," he adds. Most church members believe in progressive evolution.

As for miracles, Knapp said Unitarians see enough amazing things in the physical world. "The birth of a child is miraculous enough," says the minister. The notion of a virgin birth strikes Knapp as contrary to the laws of nature.

That type of religious thinking strikes him as a "comic strip" or "Santa Claus" approach to theology.

The Unitarian minister sees the bible as containing "some of the most beautiful literature of all time" and as a record of man's search for the good life.

Knapp says Unitarians don't see God as "having big ears" and hearing all requests directed upward. The concept of God, in his view, has been created by man. He makes no excuses for this belief.

Says the minister: "We're proud of being humanists."

More on the type of religious fare found at the Terre Haute Unitarian Church at 416 south Sixth St. can be had by dialing 232-4228. At 9:30 a.m. every Sunday a course entitled Adult Study is offered followed by a 10:30 service open to all.

This Sunday, Sister Ruth Eileen Dwyer of St. Mary-of-the-Woods College will speak on the Political Difference in a Religious community. On Oct. 30, Indiana Civil Liberties Union executive director Michael Gradison will discuss Separation of Church and State.

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Churches(UU)

Minister to address U.N.'s nuclear role

Community Affairs File

Ts OCT 1 1984

Homer A. Jack will be guest speaker at the First Unitarian-Universalist Society, 416 S. Sixth St. He will discuss "The United Nations at Forth: Can the World Organization Stave off Nuclear War?" at 10:30 a.m. Oct. 14.

JACK

Jack serves as minister of the Lake Shore Unitarian-Universalist Society, Winnetka, Ill.

For 24 years he was a representative of nongovernmental organizations at the U.N. During that period he served as representative of the American Committee on Africa, the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy and the World Conference on Religion and Peace.

He was founder and 12-year chairman of the nongovernmental organization's Committee on Disarmament at U.N. headquarters and was especially active on civil rights issues which came before the international body.

In May he was awarded the second Niwano Peace Prize in ceremonies in Tokyo.

A carry-in luncheon will follow his lecture. The public is welcome to attend an open house to begin at 1:30 p.m.

Vigo County Public Library

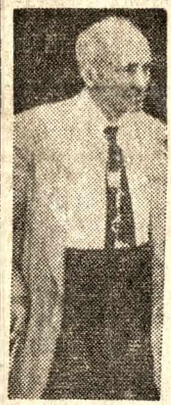
Churches

Sunday, April 10, 1955.

First Universalist Church of T. H.

By A. R. Markle.

RELIGION and education seemed to take root in Terre Haute from around 1840, when a number of our churches were organized here, and around 1850, rising from the desire to educate, began an agitation for the attainment of public schools, with the aid of public taxation. However, in both cases, it was an uphill struggle and success came through the earnest efforts of very small groups.



A. R. MARKLE.

While the Methodists and the Presbyterians had been active in very early days, the Presbyterians seemed to have been the earliest definite organization, for they were organized by 1828, while the Methodists were a rather loosely knit congregation until they built Old Asbury in 1840. Saint Joseph's congregation wes the first active church of the Catholic faith, starting with 1838 when they first built on the present site of St. Joseph's Church on Fifth street, a location which they have held without a single removal to other sites. The Episcopal faith began about the same time when they erected their modest frame building on Fifth street, where they held forth a score of years before removing to their present location which has seen few changes in their life.

In May, of 1841, a spirited debate between Rev. B. F. Foster and some other clergymen resulted in the organization of the first Universalist Church in Terre Haute with a membership of 12. The congregation composed of Thomas Parsons, John Britton, Ransom Miller, Tindall A. Madison, Ozias Vantassel, Augustus L. Chamberlain, William Miller and Charles T. Noble, purchased from Luke and Eliza Johnston, for $700, two lots facing on Fourth street, at the southeast corner of Ohio. This sale took place in February of 1842.

First Building Erected.

Here the first building was erected and duly dedicated by the Reverend John Kidwell. The membership grew then to thirty-nine, and this building served as their meeting house for twenty-five years.

Some years later, in April of 1846, the Universalist Society Trustees, Madison, Vantassel and Noble, purchased for five hundred dollars, lots 45 and 46, excepting fifty feet off the east side, which was conveyed to John Wonner, and on which, later, a three-story brick building was constructed. That building now stands on the corner of the alley. The members who held possession of the property at the time of the purchase were: Thomas and Elizabeth Parsons, John and Catherine Britton, Ransom Miller, T. A. and Mary Ann Madison, Augustus and Fanny Chamberlain, Ozias Vantassel, William and Laetitia Miller and Charles and Elizabeth Noble.

Oct. 7, 1865, the trustees leased to William H. Manning thirty-four feet north and south by ninety-one feet east and west of the south side of lot 46, fronting on Fourth street. This lease was for five years, from Oct. 23, 1865, for $345 payable in semi-annual payments of thirty-four dollars each.

The following year, 1866, the society began preparations for a new church building. For this purpose, they secured a very handsome lot, No. 128 in Rose's Addition, from Gerhardt Eshman, on the eighteenth of December, 1867. This lot is located on the east side of Eighth street between Cherry and Mulberry. Here, they proceeded with the construction of a brick meeting house, accommodating three hundred and fifty persons and costing some ten thousand dollars. Most of the actual labor was contracted to members whose profession qualified them.

By this late date the membership amounted to over one hundred.

Aug. 8, 1867, the trustees of the church, George Rugan, W. Howard Manning, Hiram Steele, Silas S. Kennedy and Albert Lange, sold to Philip Ackerle, for thirteen hundred dollars part of lots 45 and 46, reserving that the church need not be removed before March 15 1868.

Dec. 1, 1868, E. R. Robbins filed a machanics lien on the trustees of the church for $300 for lime furnished Harmon Blood for the erection of the brick building at the Eighth street location. This claim was accepted by the trustees and Secretary George Rugan, on the ninth of January, 1869.

Completed In 1869.

The building was completed and in use in 1869, and the members enjoyed services of a number of different pastors. No certain dates could be found in the records, but the following list gives the names in order of service to the church: Rev. B. F. Foster, John Kidwell, George Knapp, James G. Burt, Henry Jewell, S. G. Gibson, F. C. Brooks, —— Manford and —— Allen.

The church building was bought a few years later and outfitted to serve as a library. While this particular structure and its location were adapted to church purposes, there was a very heated opposition raised to the purchasing of it for a city library.

Minutes of the Secretary.

The following was taken from the original minutes of the church: May 19, 1860—The society met for the purpose of electing five trustees and a secretary and treasurer. Present were: John Wonner, moderator; James Wyeth, secretary; William Peppers, William Bennett, Harmon Blood, James Hudson, William Patrick, Charles T. Noble, Tindall A. Madison, Luther Miller, Albert Lange and Gerome Burnett.

Elected were: John Wonner, treasurer; Gerome Burnett, secretary. Meeting adjourned to meet May 28, 1960.

June, 1862 (first Monday).

Present were: John Wonner, moderator; Charles T. Noble, clerk; T. A. Madison, James Hudson, John Wonner, William Bennett, Charles Noble, Mrs. Elizabeth Pettingill, Mrs. Emma Duff and Miss Sarah McFadden.

Elected were: Madison, Blood, Wonner, Hudson, Noble, trustees; Madison, secretary and Noble, treasurer.

June 1, 1863: William Patrick certifies the election of: Lange, Holmes, Blood, Patrick and Wyeth, trustees.

June 4, 1866: Albert Lange certifies the election of: Lange, Holmes, Blood, Peppers and John H. Barr, trustees.

June 3, 1867: William Howard Manning certifies the election of: George Rugan, Hiram Steele, W. H. Manning, Silas S. Kennedy and Albert Lange, trustees.

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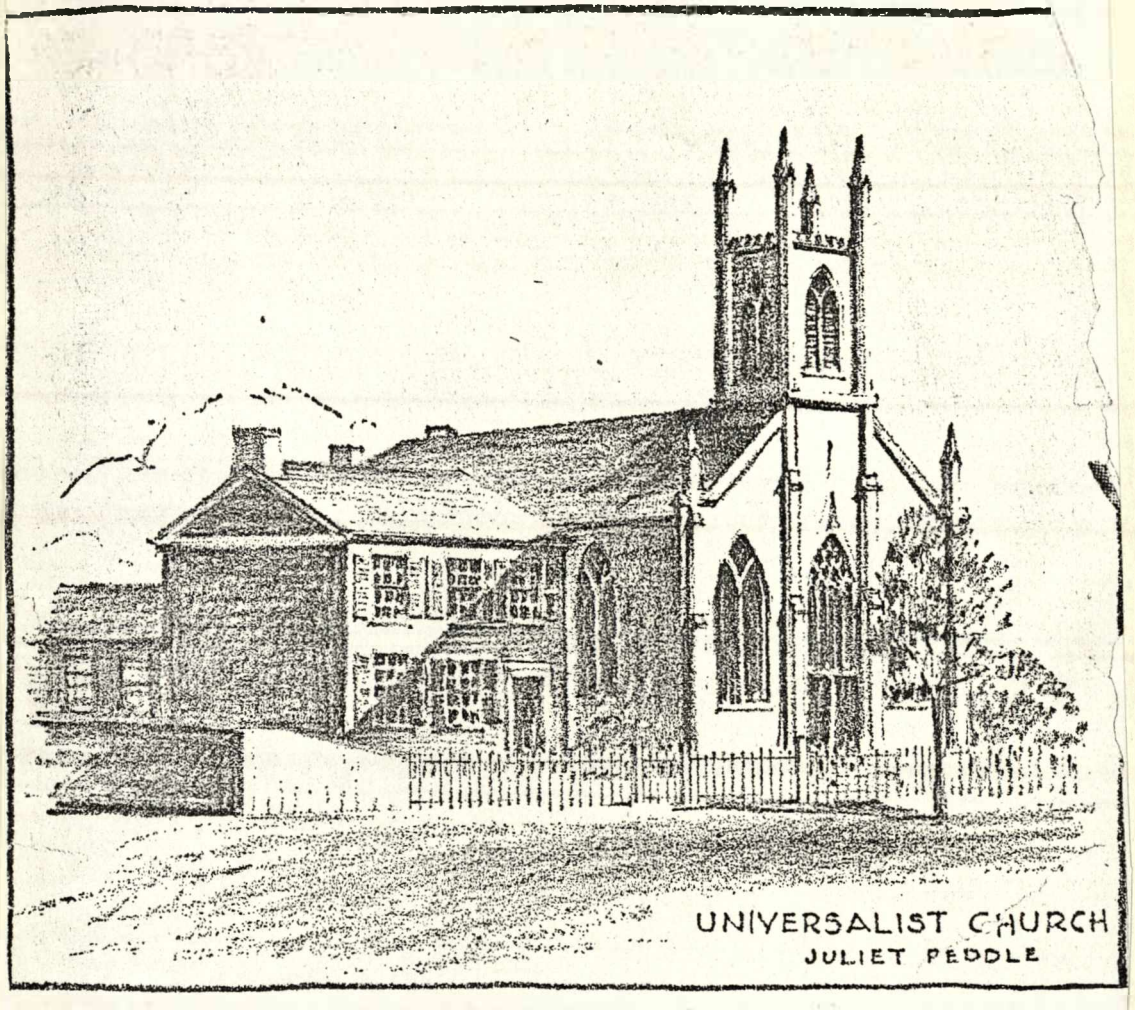
Early Types of Homes and Buildings Here—No. 4



THE FIRST UNIVERSALIST CHURCH HERE, FOURTH AND OHIO STREETS. DRAWING BY JULIET A. PEDDLE, TERRE HAUTE ARTIST AND ARCHITECT.

THE first Universalist church in Terre Haute was located on the southeast corner of Fourth and Ohio, streets facing north.

The church was organized May 8, 1841, with 12 members and the building must have been erected that year because I find several references to the act that this church building had served the congregation 25 years when they prepared to build a new one in 1866. Rev. John Kidwell officiated at the dedication and the membership had increased by this time to 39 members.

In 1866 a lot was purchased on the east side of Eighth street between Cherry and Mulberry, where they erected a brick church costing about $10,000. This new building had a seating capacity of 350 persons and was said to be a very fine church.

Some time in the eighties the church organization ceased to function and the building on Eighth street stood idle several years. In 1896 it was purchased by the board of education for a public library. The library continued in this building until the Fairbanks Library was ready for occupancy in 1906, when the books were transferred there. Most of the time since that date it has been occupied by the Prox & Burget Company, who only moved out within the past year.

The above illustration is taken from the map of 1854. The house to the left of the church is in the original picture and I have not been able to identify it to date. I would assume, however, that it is the pastor's residence, but I may be mistaken in this.

This is another of the early Gothic revival churches and its construction in 1841 places it earlier than any other of the Gothic churches illustrated so far.

Churches (w/v)
First Universalist

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Community Affairs File

Unitarian Universalist Society Receives Gift of Failey Property

T.H. Churches
T.H. Star - 1/7/64

First Unitarian Universalist Society of Terre Haute has been given the Failey property at 416 South Sixth Street by Crawford Failey and his wife for use as a church. The gift includes some furnishings and a considerable portion of Failey's library.

Announcement of the gift was made yesterday following the filing of the second deed for the property. First deed was filed shortly before Christmas but no announcement was made until the entire property had been deeded to the church.

+ + +

NO VALUATION was placed on the gift but it is estimated it would take about $178,000 to replace the structures. In addition to the house of concrete, steel and stone construction, there is a large garage with apartments above it and a conservatory.

The downstairs floor of six

Gift

Continued From Page 1

rooms and bath will be used for the adult church. The second floor, which has six bedrooms and three baths, will be used for the Sunday School. In addition, there is a third floor and a full basement.

+ + +

THE FLOORS are either tile or parquet flooring. The house is heated by a gas furnace and has central air conditioning and also central humidification.

Failey offered it to the church with no strings attached, but said he expected it to be used for a liberal church, members of the congregation said.

Formal dedication is planned for April but no definite date has been set. Church services and Sunday School will start next Sunday. The congregation visited it last Sunday.

+ + +

WHEN IT IS more appropriately furnished, the church will be made available for other community group functions, it was stated.

The Unitarian Universalist Society consists of about 50 families. Lyle Schmidt is chairman and vice chairman is Mrs. John Laska. Mrs. Joseph Hennen is secretary and Lester E. Wolf is treasurer.

Dr. Joseph Hennen, botanist on the staff of Indiana State College, will be in charge of the conservatory and grounds. The property occupies a little more than a half acre of land.

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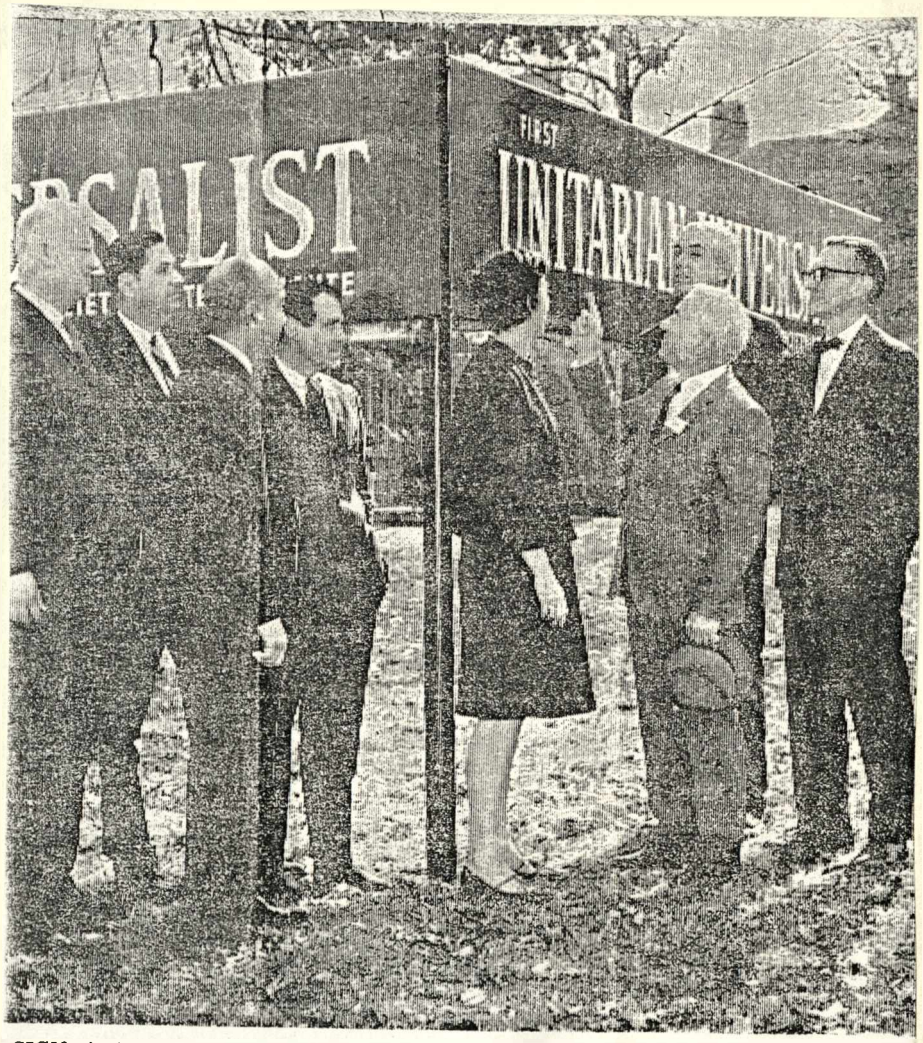

SIGN at 6th and Swan Sts. marks the location of the Meeting House of the Unitarian Universalist congregation of Terre Haute. The marker is the first step in a development program planned by the group. Witnessing the dedication are, left to right, A. W. Lindholm, chairman of the board of trustees and co-designer of the sign; Samuel Beecher Jr., treasurer; Walter Edwards, trustee; Ewing Miller, also a past chairman and architect consultant on the expansion program; Mrs. Willard Walter, secretary; Harrison Crichfield, vice chairman and co-designer; Dr. John Crittenden, chairman, and James Shanks, trustee.
Trib. T.H. Churches 11-24-66 **Photo by Strausburg.**

Community Affairs File

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Churches (UU)
Unitarian / Universalist

Local Unitarians Initiate Program of Development

T.H.-Trib. 11/24/66

Another congregation in the community of Terre Haute churches planning to expand or remodel their facilities is the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Terre Haute.

The first evidence of their development program is the new sign which made its appearance recently on the lawn of the group's Meeting House located at 6th and Swan Sts. The sign, constructed of sheet steel facings on steel posts set in concrete was designed by Arthur W. Lindholm and erected by W. Harrison Crichfield, both members of the fellowship.

Plans are being readied to convert the thirty-seven-year-old carriage house which stands east of the main house into a Fellowship Chapel. Last spring the congregation voted to undertake the project, using funds made possible through a bequest to the fellowship by one of its members. It is hoped, work will begin this spring and continue during the summer.

Mrs. Ewing Miller, a registered architect and a member of the fellowship, is preparing the basic drawings. Her husband, architect Ewing Miller, also a member, is acting as consultant.

The plan calls for removal of the garage doors from the concrete - steel - brick structure and replace them with windows appropriate to a chapel. A new entrance will be constructed at the west end of the building leading into a reception entry. Beauty of simplicity will be the keynote of the chapel itself. Describing the interior, Mr. Miller says, "We envision the chapel area as flexible area. We hope to incorporate into its decoration works of art and expression of man's rapport with his divinity and with man. Very thoughtful consideration will be given to inclusion of music. There will be space that can be used for dance interpretation and religious drama."

Once the chapel is completed, the religious education classes which have been meeting in the carriage house will move into the main house. The main house will also be used for meetings and social activities of the fellowship and other community groups.

Founded In 1955

The local Unitarian Universalist Society was founded in January, 1955 under the leadership of the Rev. Donald Thompson, now of Boston, Mass., who started several other fellowships throughout the midwest. The group first assembled at the YMCA and then purchased the property at 800 S. Center St. for a Meeting House. In 1963, Dr. Crawford F. Failey, formerly of Terre Haute, offered the house and grounds, the carriage house and green house at 416 S. 6th St. to the local fellowship as a gift to be used as a Meeting House and a center of intellectual and ethical thought. The stone structure was built in 1935 on the site of the old Crawford Fairbanks home. The architect for the building was Warren Miller, uncle of Ewing Miller, and was built for Dr. Failey's father, the late Bruce Failey. The fellowship acquired possession of the generous gift in January, 1964, and moved to its new location during that month.

The present fellowship includes about 35 member families and has not, as yet, achieved full church status, as recognized by the Unitarian Universalist denomination. The Board of Trustees for the current year include Dr. John A. Crittenden, chairman; W. Harrison Crichfield, vice chairman; Mrs. Willard Walter, secretary; Samuel Beecher Jr., treasurer; Walter Edwards, trustee; James W. Shanks, trustee, and Ewing Miller, immediate past chairman. The group, at present, has no regular minister, but depends on lay leadership; however, Dr. Otis Aggertt, ordained Universalist minister, serves the congregation on specific occasions.

Previous chairmen of the group have included Frank MacArter, Ewing Miller, Arthur Lindholm, Kenneth Gjemre, Samuel Beecher Jr., Dr. Otis J. Aggertt, Dr. Robert P. Saalbach, Robert Rust, Dr. Joe F. Hennon, and Lyle Schmidt.

The statement of purpose common to the denomination is: "The purpose of this society is to further individual freedom of belief, discipleship to advancing truth, the democratic process in human relations, brotherhood undivided by nation, race, or creed, and an understanding of all the world's religions."

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